

Working with Students Who Have a Chronic Health Disabilities

Chronic health disabilities vary in form and severity. Individuals with chronic health disabilities have different accommodation preferences and needs. There are many ways of accessing information and environments.

The best way to understand an individual's needs is to engage in a private conversation with them.

Questions you might ask include:

- What barriers do you experience in a classroom?
- What are the accommodations that help you access the content, the class, the environment?
- How can we create an accessible experience for these elements of the class? (addressing the different types of experiences in your class- groups, presentations, tests/quizzes, papers, etc.)

Medical impairments are often **non-apparent disabilities**, caused by such conditions as arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes, orthopedic limitations, post surgery, chronic fatigue syndrome, or seizure disorder.

Functional limitations **may be episodic** for some students who may experience dizziness, disorientation, and difficulty breathing during a recurrence.

Accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Flexibility of attendance requirements (within the essential requirements of the course and conversation with professor)
- Skyping into class or meetings
- Extended time for assignments and tests/quizzes.
- Priority seating
- Furniture accommodations

If you would like verification that a student has a disability, ask the student to provide you with a letter from the Disability Services Office (DSO). The DSO produces these letters only for students who are registered with the office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file. The DSO can send you this letter directly.

As a professor seeking to support a student with chronic health disabilities, you are asked to:

- **Talk with the student** about implementing the accommodations in the accommodation letter. These may include:
 - Frequent rest breaks
 - Extended time on exams or assignments, as necessary
 - Seating arrangements, physical supports
- Periodically **check in with the student** privately to make sure that all class content is being accessed.
- **Talk with DSO and the student** regarding accommodations regarding **flexibility of attendance**. We will engage in an interactive process to determine how this accommodation will be implemented. The essential academic components of the course should be maintained and the student should not be penalized for their disability. *
- Don't hesitate to call the Disability Services Office (DSO) to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, a disability services staff member, and the student to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.

***Determining What is Fundamental to the Nature of a Program**

Students must be able to perform the essential functions of a program **with or without accommodations**. Postsecondary institutions are not required to waive or substitute elements that are fundamental to the nature of the program. It is not up to an individual faculty member to decide what is fundamental to the nature of a program. Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and case law provides guidance for this decision-making process.

The DSO staff is available to assist with this process and to help answer any questions about the disability issues.